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Statement submitted by Gazeteciler ve Yazarlar Vakfı, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is being issued without formal editing.



Statement

The Journalists and Writers Foundation (Gazeteciler ve Yazarlar Vakfı) is an Istanbul-based non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council. Since its establishment in 1994, the Foundation aims to promote peaceful coexistence through dialogue and understanding at global, regional and local levels. Through its projects and activities, it has brought together people from various backgrounds to discuss topics including but not limited to politics, religion, art, philosophy and science in order to establish common ground and, ultimately, peace.

The Women's Platform is one of the five platforms under the umbrella of the Foundation. The guiding principle of the Women's Platform is dialogue and peace building at local and global level. With a special focus on improving the role of women in creating democratic grounds for the resolution of problems, it works on disintegrated families, gender-based discrimination and humanitarian crises in various parts of the world, and for building and maintaining peace.

The draft of the United Nations post-2015 development agenda and the discussion of sustainable development goals emphasize women's role, both as a matter of human rights and for its impact on development. As women have become stronger, individually and collectively, our issues have moved closer to their proper place at the centre of global discussion, national action and community acceptance. Bit by bit, women's world is changing. Our objective in this statement is to develop a perspective, which uplifts women from the status of an object to that of a true subject, try and integrate fragmented points of views and develop a holistic, consistent and a strong approach.

Women continue to be the majority among people living in poverty and who suffer from hunger, illiteracy, dislocation, violence, poor nutrition and ill health. Women's rights are inseparable from men's and they are not optional. Protecting and promoting women's equality is a responsibility of every government. Human rights will only be respected and our societies will only flourish when governments deliver on that responsibility. However, countries and the international community have not yet succeeded in putting women's empowerment and gender equality at the top of the policy agenda.

The Foundation's advocacy is that gender is not a niche or a minority issue. Women represent half the world and as being fellow citizens they have the same human rights as men. Being a transnational non-government organization, the Foundation collaborates with various local civil society organizations to improve the status of women all over the world with a special emphasis on girls' education. Holding women back from being empowered holds the development in the entire country, and the entire world. Therefore, the post-2015 development agenda must truly focus on the wellbeing of women.

The Millennium Development Goals failed to address the outrageous crimes of gender-based violence, and how women suffer to access the basic needs such as education, food, housing, sanitation and water. One of the most critical lessons that the international community learned from the Millennium Development Goals is that the targets ignored the terrible burden of conflict on women. The goals neglected women's health issues beyond motherhood, the injustice of women's unpaid work in households and unequal pays in the labour force.

Gender equality and women's rights are key factors to address the unfinished mission of the Millennium Development Goals and accelerating global development beyond 2015. Gender equality matters in its own right as a prerequisite for the health and development of families and societies, and as a trigger of the economic growth. The post-2015 framework should retain a strong and stand-alone goal on gender equality and women's empowerment, and include gender-specific targets and indicators in the other goals.

Civil Society Organizations are the pioneers in promoting the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and other global agreements. They play an important role in the formulation of policies on critical issues by bringing the voice of grassroots organizations and communities to United Nations decision-making bodies. They also act as advocates disseminating the views and information on the new targets and mobilizing support for their implementation.

Apart from being an advocate, Civil Society Organizations hold their governments responsible for the commitments in implementing the new agenda. Their specialized knowledge and understanding of local populations and regional issues often enable governments and United Nations programs to focus on how to close gaps in the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals and serve the most vulnerable groups. Civil Society Organizations cooperate with the United Nations and regional organizations through broader mobilization and campaigning work among the public — both nationally and internationally to accelerate this transition period.

Finally, broad public participation is a fundamental prerequisite to achieve the sustainable development, which integrates economic, social and environmental aspects as a foremost a bottom-up and multi-stakeholder process. It depends on active engagement of civil society groups to design and implement sustainable development projects with long-term needs and local conditions in mind.

The Foundation is very active in putting the gender sensitivity at the priority of the post-2015 development agenda. In this respect, Istanbul Summit is one of the most important initiatives of the Foundation. Istanbul Summit is an international, non-governmental, multi-sector forum, which aims to gather prominent women leaders and stakeholders from every quarter of the international community with a new topic each year. It aims to provide a setting for experience sharing among international stakeholders to exchange ideas and seek ways of cooperation to address contemporary global challenges in a gender sensitive manner. The main objective of the Istanbul Summit 2014, "Women's Perspectives on the post-2015 development agenda," was to ensure that women's perspective is adequately represented in the design, implementation and monitoring of the sustainable development goals.

Istanbul Summit urges that in the transition period from the Millennium Development Goals to the sustainable development goals, inclusiveness and human-based approach to development are the key factors. Within this framework, the Final Declaration of the Istanbul Summit 2014 outlined the general principle of the post-2015 development agenda and emphasized the role of civil society from women's perspective. It is also proposed in the declaration that gender equality before the law, in the workplace and at home is adopted as a stand-alone goal to be integrated into all other goals.

This year, the theme of the Istanbul Summit 2015 is "Women as the Beneficiaries and Actors of Humanitarian Action". Prominent women leaders will discuss the effects of mass displacements with a special focus on women. Believing that with the appropriate support, refugee women can improve their lives and the lives of their children, families and communities, Istanbul Summit 2015 aims to convey a strong message for the full participation of women in all decisions affecting their lives.

It is important that the policy suggestions of the civil society organizations are actually implemented in the developing countries. Besides contributing to the post-2015 development agenda by organizing international summits and participating in the Commission on the Status of Women's annual meetings, Foundation is also taking great initiatives to work on the ground with the aim of achieving the sustainable development goals.

At the 58th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the Foundation organized a side-event entitled "Girls' Education in Afghanistan: Achievements and Challenges". Experts discussed the achievements of the Afghan people in girls' education and the challenges of implementing education policies formulated by the national and international agencies. Diminishing the gender disparity in education, especially in primary and secondary levels, has been the major focus of the discussions.

Following up our panel and the field research in Afghanistan conducted by the Associate Professor, Ms. Semiha Topal from Fatih University in Turkey, we have established an Information Communication and Technology Lab in Afghanistan. Currently the lab serves to 300 girls. Besides science and math lessons, the volunteer teachers teach the students information technology skills. In this matter, the Foundation has collaborated with the United Nations Mission Donations Program to send over 100 computers to this lab to equip this educational institution with the latest technology to empower girls.

Raising the awareness of the importance that "gender sensitivity" plays in the new agenda is not enough by itself. The sustainable development goals should be supported with the action-oriented participation of the civil society organizations. In this manner, the Foundation proposes specific recommendations for the way forward to fulfil the demand of a gender sensitive agenda. The Foundation categorizes its suggestions under six main titles.

(a) Power of Institutionalizing Gender Equality: To encourage institutionalizing gender equality in the post-15 Agenda, we must utilize women's transformative roles in implementing sustainable reforms, mainstream women into governance and all levels of decision-making mechanisms and establish a monitoring/auditing mechanism to ensure gender legislation and policy is implemented.

(b) Political Empowerment of Women: We must urge local governments to create initiatives to encourage and advance women parliamentary candidates at all levels and mentor the new women parliamentarians. We should make political will visible in all types of policies and strategies. Civil society organizations should build capacity for inexperienced women coming into the positions of leadership and establish a gender budgeting program to ensure the accountability for expenditure on women.

(c) **Inclusive Legislation Recognizing Women's Equal Rights:** We should establish quotas and affirmative action to increase women's representation at all levels of decision-making and mandate political parties to 'normalize' women's involvement in politics by internal affirmative action policies at all levels of political party operations.

(d) **Investing in Girls — Educational Parity:** Local governments must ensure that girls have access to education and mentorship. Improving education quality for girls has a key influence on girls and women achieving gender equality and empowerment. However, in higher education, there is still poor participation and retention of girls and women, at both student and academic staff levels. We should advocate a recognized need for accountability, research and gender-disaggregated data.

(e) **Promoting Women's Participation in Economic Growth:** Empowering women can fundamentally transform the post-conflict economies and fight the trap of poverty. Therefore, governments must ensure that microeconomic loans provide enough support for women entrepreneurs. Women are mostly working in traditional roles. We should involve women's grassroots movements in all economic initiatives. Training courses including financial literacy training, access to financial services, business mentoring, and agribusiness are also strong methods of empowering women.

(f) **Challenging Cultural Attitudes and Gender Stereotypes:** Engaging men, especially male cultural and religious leaders at national and local levels, will have a transformative role in this matter. We should encourage our local communities to recognize the leadership role of women and resolve to promote gender equality to ensure their full and effective participation in sustainable development policies and programs.

(g) Without a doubt, sustainable development and a truly peaceful and harmonious society are all only possible when all talents including the skills of women are free to thrive. Peace and harmony among the society can only then be ensured when every fellow citizen's human rights are recognized. To achieve this, women themselves must have the possibility to have a direct active and decisive hand in the design of this new agenda for humanity. Without women's involvement in the decision-making processes of policies and programs, it will not be possible to establish a sustainable development and, ultimately sustainable peace.

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Statement

Introduction

There are an estimated one billion persons living with disabilities across the globe, 80 per cent of them in developing countries. They face multiple barriers to participation in society: barriers to access to development programs, education, employment, health care, communication and transportation. Households with a disabled member are more likely to experience material hardship, including food insecurity, poor housing, lack of access to safe water and sanitation and inadequate access to health care.

The current Millennium Development Goals have failed to improve the livelihood of persons with disabilities. They are not mentioned in any of the 8 Goals, attendant 21 Targets or 60 Indicators. In the post-2015 agenda the inclusion of persons with disabilities has been recognized as central to achieving sustainable development.

The transition from the Millennium Development Goals to the sustainable development goals must ensure that the new framework is accessible for and inclusive of persons with disabilities, promoting their rights and full and effective participation. Below are some recommendations, which are also supported by the International Disability and Development Consortium of which Light for the World is a member.

1. Require all national plans, development strategies and/or mechanisms established to help implement the post-2015 development agenda to complement and support the national implementation and reporting requirements of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
2. Develop a clear financing framework and commit to mobilising sufficient public and private resources to meet the rights of persons with disabilities, and to 'leave no one behind'.
3. Ensure that accessibility is a key criterion in spending public and private resources. Public and private resources must be used in ways that always contribute to inclusion and ensure accessibility in order to ensure that no-one is left behind. Safeguards must be in place to ensure this.
4. Set indicators that incentivise disability-inclusive development and which disaggregate the impact of the post-2015 development agenda on persons with disabilities. To ensure that the sustainable development goals are inclusive of persons with disabilities and leave no one behind, the indicators that track progress should disaggregate data by disability and other social or economic groupings.
5. Last, but not least, an efficient transition from the Millennium Development Goals to the sustainable development goals should ensure that the meaningful participation of persons is guaranteed in the design, implementation of policies, including fiscal ones. This means creating accessible, inclusive, transparent participatory processes.